

12-25-1997

DDASaccident132

Humanitarian Demining Accident and Incident Database
AID

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DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

Report date: 15/05/2006	Accident number: 132
Accident time: not recorded	Accident Date: 25/12/1997
Where it occurred: Abas Abad, Kandahar city	Country: Afghanistan
Primary cause: Field control inadequacy (?)	Secondary cause: Inadequate equipment (?)
Class: Excavation accident	Date of main report: [No date recorded]
ID original source: none	Name of source: MAPA/UNOCHA
Organisation: Name removed	
Mine/device: PMN AP blast	Ground condition: building rubble residential/urban
Date record created: 13/02/2004	Date last modified: 13/02/2004
No of victims: 1	No of documents: 1

Map details

Longitude:	Latitude:
Alt. coord. system:	Coordinates fixed by:
Map east:	Map north:
Map scale: not recorded	Map series:
Map edition:	Map sheet:
Map name:	

Accident Notes

inadequate investigation (?)
inconsistent statements (?)
long handtool may have reduced injury (?)
mechanical follow-up (?)
partner's failure to "control" (?)
standing to excavate (?)
use of shovel (?)

Accident report

At the time of the accident the UN MAC in Afghanistan favoured the use of two-man teams (usually operating a one-man drill). The two would take it in turns for one to work on vegetation cutting, detecting and excavation, while the other both rested and supposedly "controlled" his partner.

An investigation on behalf of the UN MAC was carried out and its report made available. The following summarises its content.

The victim had been a deminer for one year. It was one month since he had last attended a revision course and 39 days since his last leave. The victim was working in a residential area clearing the spoil from a back-hoe operation.

The investigators determined that the victim was investigating a reading in a pile of soil deposited by the back-hoe when the mine went off. The investigators reported that the victim claimed to have been using a bayonet but that his lack of injury made them think this unlikely.

The Team Leader said the victim was working properly and that the back-hoe spoil was not broken up and very hard, so the accident was unavoidable.



The picture shows a deminer working through back-hoe spoil in Kandahar in 1998. Note his working position, which was raised fully onto his knees as soon as I put the camera away.

The victim's partner said that the deminer was working properly but must have used too much pressure on his bayonet/prodder.

The victim said he was working properly until he made the mistake of prodding too deep.

Conclusion

The investigators concluded that the victim was using a long handled shovel to investigate the reading, which should not be done.

Recommendations

The investigators recommended that deminers must not use long handled shovels to excavate detector readings, that the team command group should supervise more closely, and that the back-hoe operator should spread the spoil evenly to allow "smooth searching" by the deminers.

Victim Report

Victim number: 168	Name: Name removed
Age:	Gender: Male
Status: deminer	Fit for work: yes
Compensation: not made available	Time to hospital: not recorded
Protection issued: Helmet	Protection used: not recorded
Thin, short visor	

Summary of injuries:

INJURIES

minor Head

minor Hearing

COMMENT

See medical report.

Medical report

The accident report summarised the victim's injuries as mild head trauma, temporary shock and a headache for several days.

The insurers were informed on 2nd January 1998 that the victim had received a mild head trauma and deafness.

The demining group submitted a claim on 6th April 1998 on behalf of the victim, saying he had been off work until 15th January 1998. Another claim submitted on 23rd April 1998 recorded that the victim was passed fit to resume his duties on 6th April 1998.

No record of compensation was found in June 1998.

Analysis

The primary cause of this accident is listed as a *"Field control inadequacy"* because the inconsistent statements imply that supervisors felt they had something to conceal. The inconsistencies in their statements imply that some were lying, and the UN MAC's failure to address the problem of dishonesty among field supervisors represents a management failing.

It is ironic that the investigators were reluctant to believe that the victim was using a bayonet because his injuries were so light. They obviously recognise that had he been using a bayonet it is very likely that his hand injury would have been severe, yet they still accept the management's choice of a short AK bayonet as a suitable excavation tool.

The secondary cause is listed as *"Inadequate equipment"* because a shovel was used as an excavation tool.

The use of the shovel and an upright position to "excavate" were both in breach of UN requirements, but not in breach of the demining group's unauthorised variations to those requirements. The failure of the UN MAC to either listen to field feedback and adapt SOPs for local conditions, or enforce their own standards may be seen as another management failing.

The agency that was used to make investigations for the UN MAC (based in Pakistan) at this time was frequently constrained by lack of funds, staff and transport. At times their movement

was constrained by safety concerns. As a result, investigations were frequently delayed by weeks, meaning that an assessment of the site at the time of the accident was impossible.